

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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R 111545Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
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INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BRASILIA 6313

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, BR
SUBJECT: FIGUEIREDO AS A CANDIDATE: IMAGERY

REF: BRASILIA 6114

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: OFICIAL PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE
JOAO BAPTISTA FIGUEIREDO APPEARS TO BE MEETING WITH SOME
SUCCESS AS HE SEEKS TO DEVELOP A POPULAR PERSONAL IMAGE
AND TO COPE WITH THE PUBLIC EXPOSURE INHERENT IN POLITICAL
LIFE. THESE EFFORTS ARE IMPORTANT TO HIS LONGER-TERM
POLITICAL VIABILITY. END SUMMARY

2. SINCE HIS DESIGNATION BY SEISEL IN JANUARY AS THE
OFFICIAL CANDIDATE FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION AND
HIS SOMEWHAT ILL-ADVISED INTERVIEWS WITH THE NATIONAL
PRESS THIS SPRING, FIGUEIREDO'S PUBLIC IMAGE HAS UNDERGONE
A SUBSTANTIAL TRANSFORMATION. AT THE TIME OF HIS DESIG-
NATION, FIGUEIREDO CARRIED NOT ONLY THE LIABILITY OF BEING
UNKNOWN EVEN WITHIN THE ELITE, BUT THE ADDITIONAL ONES OF
HAVING SERVED AS THE HEAD OF THE NATION'S INTELLIGENCE
APPARATUS--WHICH IPSO FACTO MADE HIM SUSPECT TO LIBERALS--
AND OF BEING ARBITRARILY HAND-PICKED BY GEISEL--WHICH
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OFFRONTED MANY WITHIN THE "SYSTEM". IN THE INTERVENING
MONTHS, HE (WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF NUMEROUS ADVISORS)
HAS GRADUALLY OVERCOME, TO A LARGE EXTENT, THESE
INITIAL DISADVANTAGES; HE HAS MOVED TO CREATE A POSITIVE
PUBLIC IMAGE FAR REMOVED FROM ONE OF AN ARROGANT, REMOTE,
AUTHORITARIAN PERSONALITY. ESSENTIAL TO THIS IMAGE
BUILDING PROCESS HAS BEEN THE REGIME'S STATED COMMITMENT

TO POLITICAL REFORMS WHICH HAS PERMITTED FIGUEIREDO TO ADOPT CAUTIOUSLY LIBERAL POSITIONS ON MAJOR DOMESTIC ISSUES.

3. PERHAPS THE MOST EFFECTIVE SINGLE STEP IN IMAGE MAKING WAS THE SIMPLEST: FIGUEIREDO SUBSTITUTED SLIGHTLY TINTED GLASSES FOR THE VERY DARK SUNGLASSES HE HABITUALLY WORE. WITH THIS STEP AND THE ADOPTION OF A READY SMILE, HE WAS IMMEDIATELY TRANSFORMED FROM A UNIVERSAL STEROTYPE OF AN INTELLIGENCE SERVICE CHIEF INTO A SEEMINGLY APPROACHABLE MIDDLE-AGED BUT TRIM EXECUTIVE. (EARLY ON FIGUEIREDO ALSO CEASED TALKING ABOUT HORSES, HIS LOVE OF RIDING, ETC., AND AVOCATION WHICH HAD BEEN THE BUTT OF MUCH RIDICULE AND PARODY BY THE COUNTRY'S CARTOONISTS AND JOURNALISTS.)

4. ANOTHER MAJOR STEP WAS HIS RETIREMENT FROM THE ARMY IN JUNE. THIS REMOVED THE CONSTRAINT THAT ACTIVE MILITARY DUTY POSED. ALMOST IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER, ARENA CONTRACTED WITH SAO PAULO AD AGENCY MPM TO DIRECT PUBLICITY EFFORTS FOR FIGUEIREDO AND THE PARTY IN THIS FALL'S ELECTION. THE AGENCY, WHICH HAD THE LARGEST BILLINGS IN 1977 (AND A NUMBER OF LARGE STATE ENTERPRISES AS CLIENTS), HAS YET TO REVEAL PUBLICLY ITS CAMPAIGN STRATEGY. ASIDE FROM MPM, FIGUEIREDO ALSO GATHERED A PERSONAL CAMPAIGN STAFF HEADED BY GENERAL DANILO VENTURINI, CHIEF OF THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE SCHOOL, AND CONFIDENTIAL

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INCLUDING SAID FARHAT, PRESIDENT OF THE STATE TOURIST ORGANIZATION AND A FORMER EDITOR OF NATIONAL WEEKLY VISAO, MIGUEL COLASUONNO, ADVISOR TO THE PLANNING MINISTRY, WHO HAS BEEN DESIGNATED AS THE CANDIDATE'S ECONOMIC ADVISOR, AND FEDERAL DEPUTY NELSON MARCHEZAN.

5. IN THE PAST SIX WEEKS, FIGUEIREDO HAS UNDERTAKEN EXTENSIVE TRAVEL WITH FULL MEDIA COVERAGE IN THE STATES OF RIO DE JANEIRO, MINAS GERAIS, PARANA, SANTA CATARINA AND RIO GRANDE DO SUL VISITS TO OTHER STATES ARE IN THE OFFING. THE TRAVEL AND HIS CONTACTS APPEAR TO BE DESIGNED TO ACCOMPLISH SEVERAL PURPOSES: TO STIMULATE ARENISTAS LOOKING TOWARDS THE NOVEMBER DIRECT ELECTIONS; TO MEND FENCES WITHIN THE LOCAL PARTY ORGANIZATIONS; AND, OF COURSE, TO MAKE THE CANDIDATE BETTWER AND FAVORABLY KNOWN THROUGH THE EXTENSIVE COVERAGE WHICH THESE VISITS ENTAIL IN THE PRESS AND IN RADIO AND TELEVISION. (FIGUEIREDO HAS ALSO MET INFORMALLY

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FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
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INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BRASILIA 6313

WITH ARENA DISSIDENTS AND FLAG OFFICERS OF THE NAVY AND GENERALS OF THE BRAZILIAN AIR FORCE). DESPITE FIGUEIREDO'S DISPLAY OF TEMPER IN RIO AT A MEETING WITH RIO STUDENTS (BRASILIA 5081), FIGUEIREDO'S PERSONAL AND MEDIA APPEARANCES APPEAR TO HAVE HAD A POSITIVE EFFECT. ACCORDING TO ONE OPINION POLLSTER IN SAO PAULO, IBOPE, A JULY 30-31 SURVEY IN THE GREATER SAO PAULO AREA SHOWED THAT FIFTY-ONE PERCENT OF THOSE INTERVIEWED CITED FIGUEIREDO AS THE CANDIDATE THEY WOULD SUPPORT IN THE EVENT OF A DIRECT ELECTION TO THE PRESIDENCY CONTRASTED TO LESS THAN TEN PERCENT WHO CITED EITHER GENERAL EULER BENTES MONTEIRO OR SENATOR MAGALHAES PINTO.

6. ALTHOUGH FIGUEIREDO'S EVIDENT NATURAL AUTHORITARIAN BENT AND QUICK TEMPER REMAIN ONLY LIGHTLY MASKED, WITH EXPERIENCE HE HAS DISPLAYED AN INCREASING SOPHISTICATION IN HANDLING BOTH TELEVISION AND THE PRESS TO AVOID PITFALLS (SUCH AS HIS OFF-THE-RECORD COMMENTS TO FOLHA DE SAO PAULO, WHICH WERE SUBSEQUENTLY PUBLISHED, OR SUCH AS ANOTHER OUTBURST OF ANGER BEFORE THE TELEVISION CAMERAS AS IN RIO). HE HAS BEEN ABLY ASSISTED IN THIS BY SKILLED PRESS ADVISORS. FIGUEIREDO'S SEEMING FRANKNESS AND SPONTANEITY AND HIS RATHER DOWN HOME STYLE, WITH WHICH
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HE APPEARS TO BE INCREASINGLY COMFORTABLE--WHILE NOT LIKELY EVER TO MAKE HIM A CHARISMATIC PUBLIC FIGURE--DO ACT TO DISPEL HIS PREVIOUS IMAGE AND TO PORTRAY HIM IN A MORE HUMAN LIGHT THAN THE STERN AND AUSTERE INCUMBENT

PRESIDENT. INDEED, ONE CAN SURMISE THAT ONE CONSIDERATION IN FIGUEIREDO'S CURRENT STRATEGY IS TO DEMONSTRATE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC THAT DESPITE HIS SELECTION BY GEISEL, HE, FIGUEIREDO, IS VERY MUCH HIS OWN MAN WHILE, OF COURSE, FAITHFULLY ADHERING TO REVOLUTIONARY PRECEPTS AND GEISEL'S POLICIES.

7. FIGUEIREDO'S EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH A FAVORABLE IMAGE AMONG THE GENERAL POPULACE APPEAR TO BE OUT OF PROPORTION TO HIS IMMEDIATE ELECTORAL NEEDS SINCE BRAZIL'S NEXT PRESIDENT WILL BE ELECTED BY AN ELECTORAL COLLEGE OF APPROXIMATELY 600 DELEGATES AND THE GOVERNMENT PARTY HAS A SUBSTANTIAL MAJORITY POSITION WITHIN THAT COLLEGE. IN A BROADER POLITICAL CONTEXT THAN THE OCTOBER 15 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, THESE EFFORTS NOT ONLY SEEM DESIRABLE BUT ESSENTIAL. FIGUEIREDO NOT ONLY LACKS THE PRESTIGE WHICH GEISEL ENJOYED DURING THE LAST PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION BUT HE ALSO FACES A MUCH CHANGED BRAZIL WITH AN UNCENSORED PRESS, A CLAMOROUS POLITICAL OPPOSITION AND INTEREST GROUPS, A GENERAL ELECTION FOR THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES AND A

PORTION OF THE SENATE ON NOVEMBER 15, AND A GENERAL EXPECTATION OF POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION DURING HIS GOVERNMENT. ADDITIONALLY, THERE IS THE PROSPECT THAT THE OPPOSITION MDB MAY WELL OPT TO SUPPORT GENERAL EULER BENTES AS A RIVAL FOR THE PRESIDENCY. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, ACHIEVEMENT OF A DEGREE OF PERSONAL POPULARITY BY FIGUEIREDO, AS THE HEAD OF THE TICKET, COULD NOT ONLY POSSIBLY ACT TO BOLSTER THE GOVERNMENT PARTY'S CHANCES IN

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THE GENERAL ELECTIONS BUT TO STRENGTHEN FIGUEIREDO'S OWN HAND DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD.

8. IN SUM, FIGUEIREDO IS CONDUCTING EFFECTIVE MEXICAN STYLE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN AND LEAVING BEHIND MDB OPPOSITION WHICH IS YET TO FIGURE OUT WHETHER IT WILL HAVE CANDIDATE. SAYRE

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